

# Covenant Life: Kingdom Responsibility

## I Thessalonians 1:1-8a

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church  
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### Intro: What do we know from this series so far?

1. God relates to man according to the stipulations of the new Covenant established through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ (Mat. 26:28).
2. The Hawkwood Baptist Church covenant is a secondary covenant established by the members of the church for the purpose of encouraging one another in maintaining our covenant responsibilities.
3. Our covenant responsibilities are laid out in Scripture and summarized in the HBC covenant (See Mat. 5-7 and all the epistles).
4. Our pastor is preaching a series of sermons on the covenant for the following reasons: (1) at the request of the elders, (2) to prepare us to meaningfully renew our commitment to the covenant on the last Sunday of this month.
5. This is what the covenant says, up to, and including the portion Pastor Shafer intends to preach about today.

Having received Christ as my Lord and Saviour, having been baptized by immersion, and being in agreement with HBC's mission and vision, strategy and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Hawkwood Baptist Church family. With God's help, I commit myself to Him and to the other members, to strive to do the following:

- To live in God's grace
  - To grow as a believer
  - To share in group life
  - To serve with my gifts
  - And to be a good steward
1. I will protect the unity of my church
    - a. By acting in love toward other members – “So then, we must pursue what promotes peace and what builds up one another.” (Romans 14:19 HCSB). “Have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22 NIV).
    - b. By refusing to gossip – “No foul language is to come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.” (Ephesians 4:29 HCSB).
    - c. By following the leaders – “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17 HCSB).
  2. I will share the responsibility of my church

### Background to today's text

1. Paul is on his second missionary journey. It began with him and Silas visiting and strengthening some of the churches he planted on his first journey.
2. This is the journey on which Paul had a dream of a Macedonian man saying, “Come over and help us. Thus the gospel entered Europe for the first time in recorded history. (Acts 16)
3. Paul, Silas and Timothy began their mission in Philippi. Initially successful, they had to flee the city after Paul cast a demon out of a slave girl. She had been a fortune-teller and her owners had made a lot of money based on her “talents.”
4. These men had Paul and Silas arrested and thrown into prison, leading to the earthquake and the

conversion of the jailor.

5. After that Paul and Silas left, taking Timothy with them.
6. They went to Thessalonica, where Paul spent three weeks discussing the Scriptures, “explaining and proving (1) that the Christ (Messiah) had to suffer and rise from the dead,” and that (2) Jesus was the Messiah.
7. A church was then formed. An amazing church that immediately gained a reputation for itself as one the churches that really “got” what God wanted to do through them. In other words, the church at Thessalonica was a church that understood its kingdom responsibility.
8. Maybe there is one more thing we should note. Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians from Corinth. Think about Thessalonica in light of Paul’s recent history. On this second missionary journey he was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. There was a riot and he was run out of Thessalonica. Again, he was run out of Berea (all this is in Acts 17), and then he went to Athens, where he was laughed at. Finally, he ends up in Corinth (Acts 18) where a church is being formed, but from the beginning he had problems there as well. You can imagine how desperately Paul looked back to his one big success in Thessalonica. He had sent Timothy back to see how the church was doing (I Th. 3). What a relief Paul must have felt when Timothy could report back that the Thessalonian church was still going on as it had before.

### Today’s text

I Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace. 2 We always thank God for all of you, remembering you constantly in our prayers. 3 We recall, in the presence of our God and Father, your work of faith, labour of love, and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 knowing your election, brothers loved by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with much assurance. You know what kind of men we were among you for your benefit, 6 and you became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. 7 As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For the Lord’s message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith in God has gone out.

### Today’s text unpacked

**Verse one:** The church exists because God called it into being. (The Greek word behind church is *ekklesia*, which originally meant a group called out of a community to make decisions, etc. In the Greek Old Testament, it substitutes for “synagogue,” the assembly or community of God’s people) From this we can assume that God has called the church into being for a purpose.

Notice also that Paul speaks of the church *of* the Thessalonians. He doesn’t say the church *at* Thessalonika because he was a terrible speller and could never remember if he should spell it with a “c” or a “k”. Seriously, in Paul’s mind—in God’s mind—geography hardly enters in. The church is the people, in this case the believers designated Thessalonians. You can’t have a church without an assembly of people called out to worship and serve the living God. It is in the transformed lives of God’s people that He is glorified.

Don’t miss that this church of the Thessalonians is “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In fact, I hope you are already seeing the Trinitarian nature of Paul’s faith. God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are mentioned here as two separate persons, yet one God, or else how could the church be in them? Think about it, if I eat a hamburger you can say that the hamburger is in me, but you cannot say it is in me and Pastor Sig. He has to get his own hamburger.

But where is the Holy Spirit? Because you can't have the Trinity without three persons. He is found in Paul's statement that the Thessalonian Christians belong to the assembly of the called out, the church. And how are they called? God's people are called into union with Him when they are "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6,8).

**Verse three:** Concerning the Thessalonian church, three characteristics stand out in Paul's mind.

1. "work of faith" Really, works produced by faith, or the *working reality of your faith*. What does that mean?
  - a. They received the truth that Paul preached as what it really was, the very Word of God—truth that trumped all other truth. Truth that you could stand on, build a life on. Truth that controlled what you thought about, and how you lived.
  - b. For the Thessalonians truth was not merely something to learn, something to discuss, or something to argue about. It was something to be acted upon.
    - i. "you became imitators of us, and of the Lord" v.6
    - ii. "in spite of persecution, you welcomed the message with joy" v.6
    - iii. "the Lord's message rang out from you" v.8 Thessalonica was a seaport. People travelled in and out, and everywhere these merchants and business people went, they carried the clear message of the gospel as embodied in the life and testimony of the Thessalonian Christians.
  - c. Implied is the full development of their faith. This is the kind of thing Paul and James have in mind when they speak of endurance, and the necessity of suffering to produce maturity. These Thessalonian Christians had achieved a high level of Christian maturity in a matter of weeks, or months at most.
2. "labour of love" The original language here implies toilsome labour, ongoing self-denying service of others, mostly, btw, others in the church. We're talking about ministries with volunteers.
3. "endurance of hope" Focussed on the goal of seeing the Lord Jesus. "We'll work/till Jesus comes/we'll work"
4. This amazing faith, hope and love is always the result of the Holy Spirit's work. (v. 5) When we pray for the filling of the Spirit, we need to understand that He comes to help us carry out our responsibilities. He makes us a power centre for the gospel, not merely a comfort station for the indifferent.

## **Our HBC Covenant**

2. I will share the responsibility of my church . . .
  - a. By praying for its growth—"We haven't stopped praying for you. . . . so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:9-10 HCSB)
    - i. Kinds of growth: knowledge, discipline, holiness, maturity, Spiritual fruit, service, numerical growth through seeing souls come to faith, all of this summed up in two related words: discipleship, discipling. Being disciples and making disciples.
    - ii. Where do we pray for this growth? At church, at home, in your closet, in your small groups.

- iii. How pray? I will pray for the grace to be like the Thessalonian church, and I will encourage others while they encourage me, so that each day we can become more like the Thessalonian church.
- iv. Why pray? We have a responsibility to pray for the growth of God's kingdom! God is sovereign, and He will do His work in the world, but He has chosen to use His people as the means whereby His work is done! "God does nothing but by prayer and everything with it," John Wesley once said. And for more than two centuries, godly men and women have been saying, "Amen."

### Example of prayer

Act 4:24 When they heard this, they all raised their voices to God and said, "Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant: **Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot futile things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against His Messiah.** 27 "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness, 30 while You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs, and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God's message with boldness.

- b. By intentionally involving myself in Christ's mission to the world—"...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21 NIV).
  - i. Like Paul (a leader in world missions)
  - ii. Like Silas and Timothy (Paul's lieutenants and assistants)
  - iii. Like the merchants and business men of Thessalonika (fulfilling the Great Commission as they go)
  - iv. Like the men and women Paul mentions at the end of his epistles, they worked alongside him in their local area and carried on the work when he left.
- c. By warmly welcoming those who visit—"Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory." (Romans 15:7 NLT).
  - i. Hospitality is more important than people realize! Both Old Testament and New Testament emphasize hospitality.

Luke 16:9 And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous money so that when it fails, they may welcome you into eternal dwellings. (HCSB)

Luke 16:9 Jesus continued, "I'm telling you that although wealth is often used in dishonest ways, you should use it to make friends for yourselves. When life is over, you will be welcomed into an eternal home." (GW)

- ii. Hospitality is born out of gratitude for gifts received. What did Zacchaeus receive from Jesus? (Luke 19:1ff) More than anything else, Jesus accepted him. Zacchaeus was saved because he was accepted.